

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for sharing a virtual area among a plurality of users, the method comprising:

admitting a first user of the virtual area to take control of the virtual area for sharing a first subject information;

admitting a second user to the virtual area, the second user having a desire to control the virtual area for sharing a second subject information;

negotiating the control of the virtual area between the first and the second users; and

control-sharing either the first or the second subject information in the virtual area according to the negotiation,

wherein the control of the virtual area is exclusively shared by the first and second users, and the first or second subject information is broadcast in the virtual area.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of admitting a first user further comprises authenticating the first user and qualifying the user to control the virtual area.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of admitting a second user further comprises:

informing the second user about a sharability of the virtual area; and

disclosing a control schedule of the virtual area,

wherein the control schedule comprises necessary information regarding the first user and his control attributes.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of negotiating further comprises facilitating communications between the first and second user to reach an agreed control schedule.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising admitting other users as passive users who have no desire to control the virtual area.

6. A method for sharing a virtual area among a plurality of users for performing at least one multi-media item, the method comprising:

admitting a first user to be an owner of the virtual area to control-share a first multi-media item;

admitting a second user to the virtual area, the second user having a desire to control-share a second multi-media item;

negotiating a control of the virtual area between the first and the second users; and

adjusting the control of the virtual area according to a negotiation result so that either the first or the second user can become the owner of the virtual area and control-share the corresponding first or second multi-media item,

wherein the users admitted to the virtual area who are not the owner can form a passive audience to share the control-shared multi-media item.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of admitting a first user further comprises authenticating the first user and qualifying the first user to control the virtual area.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of admitting a second user further comprises:

informing the second user about a sharability of the virtual area; and

disclosing a control schedule of the virtual area,

wherein the control schedule comprises necessary information regarding the owner and his control attributes.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein each member of the passive audience shares the multi-media item control-shared in the virtual area if the member maintains a communication link with the virtual area.

10. The method of claim 6 wherein the owner of the virtual area manages who can be admitted to the passive audience.

11. A method for sharing information by multiple users in a virtual area in a communications network, the method comprising:

providing a virtual shared area having a unique electronic identifier, the shared area being controlled by an owner for permitting access to subject information in the shared area;

allowing a user to connect to the shared area through a user device and transfer at least a part of the subject information to the user device;

encoding, in the user device, the unique electronic identifier of the virtual area;

maintaining, by the user device, the connection to the shared area for keeping the transfer of the subject information;

storing, in a storage area in the user device, the transferred subject information; and

if the user device attempts to access the stored subject information, then:

verifying the connection to the share area;

verifying the owner information; and

verifying that the owner is currently control-sharing the stored subject information.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising storing the subject information in a temporary storage area in the user device and deleting the stored information in the temporary storage area upon the user device disconnecting from the shared area.

13. The method of claim 11 comprising substantially synchronizing the user device's access to the stored subject information with the control-sharing of the owner.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising providing means for interacting among the users in the shared area during the control-sharing of the subject information.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising displaying, to the user, a current state of the shared area.

16. The method of claim 11 further comprising scheduling, by the owner, a predetermined time the subject information will be control-shared.

17. The method of claim 11 further comprising encoding, in the user device, owner information.

18. A method for sharing multi-media information in a virtual studio on the Internet, the virtual studio having a plurality of virtual rooms, the method comprising:

recognizing an owner of a virtual room in the virtual studio;

inviting a plurality of visitors to the virtual room by the owner; and

control-sharing, by the owner, the multi-media information in the virtual room to be shared by the visitors simultaneously if a communication link is maintained between the visitors and the virtual room.

19. The method of 18 wherein the multi-media information is fully downloaded to display devices of the visitors before the control-sharing, wherein such downloaded information is not accessible by any visitor until a verification is made to confirm that the owner is control-sharing the multi-media information and the communication link is maintained between the virtual room and the visitor.

20. The method of 18 further comprising posting a control-sharing schedule by the owner to all the visitors.

21. The method of claim 18 further comprising negotiating, by at least one visitor, with the owner for control the virtual room.

22. The method of claim 18 wherein the multi-media information is owned by the owner.

23. The method of claim 18 wherein the multi-media information is provided by an on-line repository not owned by the owner of the virtual room.

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176